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published successively "Artistic Visits," "Simple Pilgrimages," "A Year in the Sahel," and a romance entitled "Dominique" — works all entitling him to a seat in the Institute, which his unexpected death prevented his taking. At Paris he lived in a small hotel, formerly the atelier of Diaz, the artist, in the Place Pigalle, where he had also one of the most beautiful ateliers in the city. Fromentin was small in stature, dry, nervous and rather bald, with a little the appearance of a military man. His loss will be regretted by all the young artists, as he had great influence in the juries of the Salon. — J. S. D.

FURNITURE AT THE CENTENNIAL.

AMONG the most attractive of the exhibits at the Centennial were those of artistic furniture, as was clearly evidenced by the crowds who gathered about them. This was a gratifying sign to the genuine lover of art, as proving how much our people are becoming interested in this most important of what may be termed the art industries. The furniture of a house forms so much more than anything else in it a part of the home, that its form and character takes an importance scarcely, if at all, less than that of the house itself. Indeed, an architecturally bad, even hideous house may be made to seem home-like and attractive, to either inhabitant or visitor, by a skillful use of artistic furniture and decorations, while inartistic and ugly furniture will effectually destroy the charm of the most correctly planned and carefully built house. In both cases the effect of the interior upon the mind does away with that of the exterior, in the one case for the worse, in the other for the better. Certainly, artistic furniture in an architecturally correct house is to be preferred, but if we can have but one, we should give preference to the furniture, since one sees so much more of the inside than of the outside of his house. It is doubtful if the production even of bad pictures be not a more excusable offense than the manufacture of bad furniture, since they are seen by fewer people, and also because, while one may refrain from buying bad pictures — especially since THE ALDINE gives him faithful reproductions of the best — no one can live without furniture; and good furniture — artistically and constructionally good — ought to be as cheap as bad.

That it is not so must be confessed, a fact for which two reasons may be found — or rather, perhaps, two in one — the first being a lack of taste on the part of buyers, and the other an unscrupulous desire to get money on the part of manufacturers. At any rate, be this as it may, the Exhibition has plainly shown that while American manufacturers can produce furniture as good as any made in the world, they have not done so to any great or general extent, and that in face of the fact that our native woods furnish materials not excelled in the world. As a consequence — we say it with regret — the show of American furniture at Philadelphia was not one to make the heart of the æsthetically inclined American leap high with

any particular amount of patriotic pride. There were honorable exceptions, but as a rule the American exhibit was not one to be proud of, while at the same time it furnished a correct reflex of the interior of the average American home, the tastes of its occupants and the skill of our manufacturers in supplying the article demanded — or in stimulating the demand for what they manufacture.

For the best examples, therefore, of really good furniture, the visitor was necessarily obliged to go to the foreign departments, and in several of these, it must be said, the artistic tastes of the visitor could be very fully gratified.

It is probable that most visitors awarded the palm to the English manufacturers, both for excellence of manufacture and severe taste, although many may have been inclined to think the ideas of solidity and severity carried somewhat too far in many instances.



CARVED BOUDOIR STAND.

Flimsiness, and what has been expressively, if inelegantly, called "gingerbread work," have not, however, usually been faults of English workmanship or of English architecture, and an error on the side of too much heaviness, especially in furniture, is much easier pardoned than its opposite.

Sir Charles Eastlake has certainly done much to improve English tastes in this direction, though he has not, of course, been the only worker in the field. This fact was sufficiently demonstrated in the English exhibit at Philadelphia, as all those will remember who lingered — and who did not? — around the miniature furnished and decorated rooms, so cleverly and so tastefully arranged by several leading manufacturers in the British section.

Without specifying by name any manufactories or attempting to draw any invidious comparisons, we may mention a few objects which attracted great attention, and worthily.

A sideboard of dark oak, magnificently carved, probably set more than one observer to wishing him-

self, or herself, the happy owner of that or its exact fellow, not only for the "eminent respectability" its possession might be supposed to confer — a feeling which would affect the merest tyro in such things — but for the real beauty of its carvings, in keeping with the massive grandeur of its architecture — one can think of no lesser word to apply to any structure so magnificent.

A dining-room set in mahogany, but with a less massive effect, and the sideboard smaller and less elaborately carved, excited great admiration, as did an inlaid mahogany sideboard. Indeed, the use made of mahogany by English manufacturers must have astonished some of our people, with whom that wood has "gone out of fashion" of late years, owing, no doubt, in great part to the want of taste and skill shown by our cabinet-makers in its manipulation. It is really a beautiful wood, as all must admit who

give it unprejudiced consideration. In fact, everybody does admit it, so far as concerns old mahogany furniture, the prejudice seeming to be against new furniture of this material, the old being praised for its rich tints by some, and by others on account, we suspect, of its age. Now, that age can not be secured except by the one process of waiting the lapse of years we are willing to admit, but that rich warm tints may be obtained by proper handling was abundantly proven in the English exhibit. Mahogany is a really American wood, and certainly ought to have its merits as fairly appreciated this side the Atlantic as the other.

Besides the articles mentioned, there were sets in satinwood, a material peculiarly adapted to certain styles of furniture, lighter in their general outlines, as well as in color, than those of oak or mahogany. The carved boudoir stand illustrated by us, though lighter than most of the work in the British department, shows what may be done by the accomplished workman in these materials. Mahogany inlaid with satinwood gives a beautiful effect, as in a secretary of these materials shown by a well-known London firm.

A side-table of satinwood and hawthorn, in the style of the last century, was also very beautiful.

The English did not entirely monopolize, by any means, the exhibition of excellent furniture, but their show was so much superior in many respects to that of any of the other European nations, that it fairly deserved to be first mentioned. The French exhibit was particularly meagre, they showing almost nothing in the way of ordinary household furniture, and those who would like to know what sort of furniture an ordinary French house contains, must either import some specimens or go to France. Except a wardrobe, with mirrors so arranged as to swing around and show the figure from all sides, and a few fancy tables inlaid with porcelain, and some knick-knacks of that sort, there was absolutely nothing to be mentioned aside from a cabinet of ebony and lapis-lazuli, style of Henry II., marked something over six thousand dollars, and a large book-case of carved walnut, style of Louis XV., for which five thousand dollars were wanted. Both were beautiful, but of no sort

of use, except to millionaires, and of not much to them. Austria did much better, for if she sent no such costly trifles, she favored us with an excellent exhibit of household furniture, good in design and in execution and valuable as showing Austrian ideas of what comfortable home furnishings are. Among other things deserving notice were some specimens of bent wood chairs, in which extreme lightness was secured without any sacrifice of strength or of beauty or correctness of design. In particular, the show of easy chairs and "rockers" shows that in this, which Europeans have long regarded as a purely American "institution," we have nothing to teach them.

Some fine specimens of carved work were shown also from Belgium and Italy, but we have not now time to notice them at any length; nor can we go into details here in regard to American furniture, as we may do hereafter. — V.

"SARDANAPALUS" AT BOOTH'S.

LORD BYRON has left it distinctly on record that his tragedy of "Sardanapalus" was not intended for the stage, and it has hence been concluded that he did not think it could be played; but it is not so that we read his lordship's sarcastic and characteristic introduction to the play as published. We are inclined to think that the noble author intended rather to express the opinion that the play was somewhat too good for the stage—and especially for the audiences—of that day, than that it was in any way unfitted for the stage or impossible to be produced. His lordship was by no means the best judge of his own—or other people's—writings, nor was he of that judicial calmness of mind which is so necessary to the critic; and we might, therefore, accept his words in regard to his own play in the literal sense in which they were not intended, instead of the sarcastic one in which they evidently were, without doing any violence to our judgment of his critical abilities. The fact is, however, that the play, though more of a closet than a stage play, seems to us, with such judicious pruning as all like plays must necessarily undergo, exceedingly well adapted for representation with the resources at the command of the modern manager—resources of which the managers of Byron's day had not the remotest conception.

The theme is certainly one full of great possibilities—the sybarite, sunk in disgraceful ease and luxury, suddenly roused, at the call of danger, to show himself a hero worthy his heroic ancestors. The action is sufficiently spirited and the dialogue does not drag, though for stage purposes needing a little professional pruning, as we have suggested. Why, then, should "Sardanapalus" not be successful on the stage? To be sure, the morality of the king and of his Ionian favorite may not be of the sternest kind, but we have had worse on the stage and nobody has been seriously shocked; besides, that of all the other characters in the piece is certainly irreproachable and the contrast is sufficiently marked. There is no trouble from this direction. What the play lacks, as a stage play, it seems to us, is some added element of lightness, of vivacity on a lower plane than the elevated one on which it now moves. We want an occasional resting-place for the mind from the high thoughts on which it is now called upon to fix itself.

As the author failed to furnish these, the management must, if they desire to see the play succeed, and so thought Messrs. Jarrett & Palmer when they produced the piece at Booth's Theatre. They gave us, accordingly, "Sardanapalus" with a ballet in the banquet scene. Moreover, they—or Mr. Bangs—very much "cut" Byron's text; but that was a necessity. They did not give us, then, Byron's "Sardanapalus," but they gave us a not improbable and thoroughly charming version of it. In the outset the text of the play was adhered to closely enough to preserve the full spirit and sense and fire of the play, and was thoroughly appreciated and enjoyed. In so far it showed that Byron's play is, in its chief characteristics, well adapted to move and please an audience.

The ballet introduced into the third act has been spoken of as an anachronism; but if that be a matter

of any consequence, we fail to see on exactly what grounds. It is not mentioned by Lord Byron as having taken place at the time it is introduced, but that does not forbid its introduction into what is supposed to be a revel in the palace of a particularly luxurious and dissolute monarch. We do not know that Sardanapalus knew anything about the ballet—probably he did not, as we have no records of anything approaching to the modern ballet at the period when the Assyrian monarch lived and reigned—in fact, so far as we know, the ballet of the present day is only about a hundred years old; but then, on the other hand, we have no positive knowledge that the Assyrians had not attained as high a degree of perfection in that direction as we have, and that it did not become afterward one of the "lost arts," to be revived as a discovery in modern times. A great many things we fondly thought to be new have since been found, by some enthusiastic antiquarian imperitently speering into the records of a "dead past" which was supposed to have effectually "buried its dead," to have been as old, or older even, than the Assyrian monarchy. Why not, then, the ballet? If men could carve in wood and stone, if they could build mighty temples and palaces, if they could make wine, and goblets out of which to drink it, if they could wear rich stuffs and blazing jewels, if they could devise revels and elaborate banquets and enjoy them, why might they not have invented the ballet?

Seriously, we do not think this question of anachronism one of much consequence under the circumstances. It is in keeping with the tone of the play and of the times, and though undoubtedly anachronistic in point of fact, does not seem so in spirit. Undoubtedly, if the ballet had been in existence at the time, it would have been found in greatest perfection in the palace of Sardanapalus. The ballet seems to us, therefore, a very allowable anachronism.

Moreover, we go to the play, if our consciences be good, to be amused, the talk of the stage as a teacher being very much nonsense. As to what the author would have said to it all we are not quite certain, he being, unfortunately, quite as dead as Sardanapalus; but we can imagine that if he could be ushered some night into a proscenium box he would enjoy the dancing of Bartolotti and of Mascagno and the agile boundings of Palladino quite as much as do the audience, and would invoke the

"Muse of the many-twinkling feet"

in a different strain from that of his famous satire on the waltz. And if he regretted the absence of some of his polished verses, he would be better pleased than he was with the London stage of his time.

Granting, for sake of argument, the propriety of the introduction of the ballet in "Sardanapalus," however, there naturally arises a question as to how much space should be given up to it. Considered as one of the diversions of the Assyrian monarch, it may not be, as we have said, altogether out of place or incongruous, and may be admitted as an adjunct to the play, furnishing just the relief from the constant tension of the highly wrought passion of the piece which the spectator needs. When, however, the play becomes an adjunct to the ballet, one has a right to inquire how much of Byron and how much of Mascagno and of Bartolotti he is getting. And we are bound to say that the dancers have altogether the advantage of the author in the time allotted to them—and also in the attention bestowed on them, which virtually settles the question, for if the public admire Italian *pirouettes* more than they do Assyrian heroics, it is the part of managerial wisdom to give them that for which they cry. And it has been magnificently done at Booth's, to the nightly delight of crowded houses.

Nothing more really beautiful has been seen on metropolitan boards, and few things to approach it. Nor has the play been by any means entirely neglected. Though pushed one side, it must be said in all fairness that so much of it as has been given has been fairly rendered with correct costumes, appropriate scenery of more than ordinary excellence of design and execution, and spirited and just action. What more would we?

THE MARSEILLAISE.

A HISTORY of the songs which, having originated in time of war, have become so popular and have so moved the people as to merit the name of war songs, would furnish food for some curious reflections. It would be curious, for instance, to know which had been, on the whole, most instrumental in moving the people, the words of the songs or the music to which those words were married. We imagine it would be found the tune had generally first captivated the popular fancy, and so the words had come to have power to rouse enthusiasm simply as forming a part, as it were, of the tune which they served to recall.

If this be not the case, we have a remarkable testimonial to the popular taste in poetry, which must run chiefly in the direction of mediocrity, for there is scarcely one of these war songs which has literary merit above mediocrity, and most of them can scarcely be classed so high even as that. Take, for instance, the "John Brown's Body," which is almost, if not quite, the only popular war lyric produced on the side of the North during the struggle. Certainly, no one will pretend that the words have any merit whatever, and yet it was to this song that our soldiers marched through the South. The celebrated "My Maryland" was only exceeded in literary badness by some of the many parodies on it, and the words of "Dixie" are even more nonsensical than those of the average negro melody—and these two were the songs of the South, though "Dixie" was not produced by the war but was adopted as the Southern war tune.

We have not space or time in which to follow up this interesting subject, and must be content with merely indicating what it would be worth the labor to do well.

Among all the battle songs, none has attained the celebrity of the "Marseillaise," nor has any other awakened so much popular enthusiasm or held its place for so long a time. It and its origin have been the theme of many romantic tales, a favorite one being that of a celebrated singer finding the author starving in a garret and saving him by singing in public this song which he had written.

This and other like tales, though very pretty in themselves, are unfortunately not at all true, the origin of the "Marseillaise" having been as prosaic as could well be imagined. It was written by Joseph Rouget de l'Isle, who, so far from being a starving poet or composer, was only a young lieutenant of artillery, stationed at Strasburg, where he attained some social distinction as an amateur poet and musician, but had not shown any commanding abilities in either these or any other matters. It was in the early part of the first French Revolution—about the beginning of the year 1792—that volunteers were called on for the patriot forces, and the Mayor of Strasburg one evening asked De l'Isle to give him a song to be sung at the departure of a detachment next morning. The young lieutenant promised compliance, and during the night wrote both music and words of the celebrated "hymn."

It was first sung before the mayor, some of the theatrical people and a few others—which singing forms the subject of our illustration—by whom it was at once approved. It was then sung in public to the volunteers, when it had such an effect that the number of volunteers was at once increased from six hundred to one thousand. The song made good progress in the army, with whom its stirring words and notes found favor at once, but was not heard in Paris until July, 1792, when it was sung there by the Marseilles contingent, and was at once named by the delighted Parisians "La Marseillaise," the name it has borne to this day.

It has ever since been the song of republicanism in France, and, for that matter, throughout the world. It was proscribed by the Bourbons, but was restored after the revolution of 1830, and Louis Philippe gave its author a pension from his privy purse. De l'Isle served in the army, but without special distinction. He never wrote anything else of consequence—a remarkable instance of a poet of one song.